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MAIL BRANCH

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DOCKET BEFORE THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

WASHINGTON DC 20554

IN THE MATTER OF AMENDMENT OF SECTION 97

DOCKET# 92-154

CHANGES TO THE NOVICE EXAMINATION

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AMATEUR RADIO OPERATOR NE8I
6 OCTOBER 1992

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DEAR Commissioners,

I have been a licensed amateur radio operator for over 26 years. I have been involved with several clubs in training new amateur operator, by teaching classes in both morse code and the Novice, Technician and General class licenses. In recent years I have not taught any classes because of time limitations due to my job. I have given several novice amateur exams over the years. My first license was a novice, and it was given by a local school teacher who took the time to teach a class, then administer the exam, all for free. For two years prior to taking his class, I was unable to master the morse code. For me it took an organized class. My repayment for his efforts, was to become active in local clubs, and to help teach classes, and present technical programs, always for free.

When the FCC started to require 2 Amateurs to administer the Novice exam, I thought this was a very good idea. I have never had any trouble to find a suitable second examiner. I always liked when I used to send away for the exam in the sealed envelope, because the temptation for teaching to an exam was always eliminated. Back then it used to be very tempting to look over the exam and give a hint, but I always avoided it. It seemed to loose something when the VEC program took it over, with the published question bank. To me, the requirement of sending off for an unknown sealed, registered, exam should have always been kept. I see nothing wrong with grading it on the spot, and letting the examinee know the results. It helps them understand the process, and to better be prepared for the next test. I think that the tests should be readily available from a central source or sources, with a simple phone call or application. Then allow 15 days for the test to be administered and the results or unopened test to be returned. This should clearly record how many tests are administered, and how many pass or fail. In my case, it would make it easy to obtain a current exam, with current questions and answers.

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If I examine the track record of the VEC program, I find several flaws. First, before VEC, the FCC in Detroit gave tests twice every week, and in many other cities on a regular basis on a walk no advanced reservation basis. I belong to a couple of clubs, and a couple times a year, they include a schedule of local VEC exams. A quick review shows this to be about once a month, usually on Saturdays. On literature for swaps, one finds VEC exams offered during Swap and Shops, which happen on Saturday or Sundays, but in both cases, advance registration of at least a week is required, with some kind of charge for the exam. Most of my friends agree with me that usually things are too busy at a swap and shop to go to an exam. Several Jewish friends have commented to me that Saturday exams are simply out of the question for religious reasons. I have several friends who have told me about how hard it is to find and schedule an exam. I have yet to even read about any walk in exam under the current VEC program. One friend of mine in the US Military told me the horror story of having arranged to attend a VEC exam, a two hour+ drive away, showing up with several others, only to find no VEC, and no exam. Then a month later having the same repeat story. That same individual had to go to great lengths to finally find two hams who could administer a novice exam. One couple I know who both work the afternoon shift, they would both like to attend classes and get their license but their work shift makes it extremely difficult. In her case half asleep in the middle of her night, she passed the code, but failed the theory for a tech. She does not want a novice or tech. They want a general. I have been helping them, and hopefully one of these days they will. Now the figures for new hams do not lie, there are lots of new hams. The VEC program has solved many problems and answered many concerns, but not all of them. For these reasons, the Novice exam should be continued to available as it has been, with the additional requirement of sending for an exam.

One of the problems I have with the VEC program is the money thing. That

is fees charged to cover costs. 20 years ago when I was with the Hazel Park Amateur Radio Club, we went to great lengths to keep the costs of a class to a minimum. Buy the book, and we would help find cheap used books for students, like Boy Scouts on very limited budgets. The club would have fund raisers to pay for the class room space, printing of pass outs and the like, we would teach for free, paying our own expenses like gasoline. We worked very hard and put alot of time and effort into teaching these free classes. As a group we felt it was wrong to charge for an amateur class, or exam. If for no other reason than it might give the impression that they were "buying" a license if any fees or donations were asked for. If they decided to support the club, fine. They did not have to. I have heard the argument again and again if someone can afford \$200 for a radio, they can afford \$5 for a license exam (etc). To a young person, or a person on a fixed income, this is can be a major problem, espicially in these hard economic times. Jobs are scarce. The amateur community fought license fees tooth and nail. I opposed them simply because the funds still go directly to the general fund, and not to the FCC. When the VEC program first came on line, the first thing they cried about was recovering expenses, charge exam fees was the answer. At swap and shops, someone getting an exam there, is faced with having to pay the swap and shop entrance fee as well as the exam fee. I have nothing against having amateur clubs and organizations support VEC's by making donations to cover expenses, such as printing, mailing, phone calls and travel, it should be ok for VEC's to accept this kind of donation without legal or moral implications, but there should be no exam fee in my humble opinion. It should be the duty of the Amateur community to further encourage new hams by not charging for exams, espicially the first entry license (Novice/code free tech). When I consider that here around Detroit, 10 years ago, there were 16 walk in free exams available each month, and now there is only one, by appointment only, fee required. I am amazed that there has been the growth that there has been. I think there is room for alot more growth,

by improving the services that are offered, not making them more unavailable.

I also feel that the FCC should the unusual step reinstituting an FCC administered exam for Amateur and Commercial licenses daily, at their Washington DC offices.

Thankyou for reading these, my comments and considering them.

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